

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, EFIN, CS

SUBJECT: COSTA RICA'S VICE-PRESIDENTS' CRITICIZE FIGUERES/VESCO
RELATIONS

BEGIN SUMMARY: BY THE WEEKEND BOTH COSTA RICAN
VICE-PRESIDENTS HAD PUT THEMSELVES ON THE RECORD AGAINST FIGUERES
RELATIONS WITH ROBERT VESCO. THE VICE-PRESIDENTS WERE RESPONDING
TO TWO PUBLIC LETTERS; ONE CALLING FOR THEM TO FORM AN
"HONOR COURT" TO JUDGE THE PRESIDENT AND ANOTHER ASKING FOR THEIR
POSITIONS ON SPECIFIC PROJECTS ALLEGEDLY CONNECT WITH THE
PRESIDENT. END SUMMARY.

1. EARLY LAST WEEK A GROUP OF 22 PROMINENT UNIVERSITY OF
COSTA RICA PROFESSORS, MOST AFFILIATED WITH THE PLN, SENT A
PUBLIC LETTER TO VICE-PRESIDENTS MANUAL AGUILAR BONILLA AND
JORGE ROSSI CHAVARRIA WHICH PRESENTED A SERIES OF CRITICAL CON-
SIDERATIONS ABOUT PRESIDENT FIGUERES RELATIONS WITH ROBERT
VESCO AND WHICH SUGGESTED THEY FORM AN "HONOR COURT" (TRIBUNAL
DE HONOR) TO CONSIDER THE PRESIDENT'S QUESTIONABLE BEHAVIOR. A
SECOND PUBLIC LETTER, THIS ONE FROM JOSE CORDERO CROCERI, A FOR-
MER PLN DEPUTY AND NOW ONE OF RODRIGO CARAZO'S PARTIDO
RENOVACION DEMOCRATICA'S LEADING PERSONALITIES, ASKED THE VICE-
PRESIDENTS TO OPINE ON: (1) THE PACIFIC CEMENT GUARANTEE PRO-
JECT; (2) VESCO ; (3) THE MYSTERIOUS DEATHS (MUERTES ESTRANAS)

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CASE; AND (4) THE HIGH COST OF LIVING UNDER THE PLN.

2. THE VICE PRESIDENTS RESPONDED SEPARATELY TO THE CORDERO CROCERI LETTER AND JOINTLY TO THE PROFESSORS. THE ANSWERS, WITH REGARD TO THE KEY QUESTION--FIGUERES'S RELATIONS WITH VESCO--WERE ESSENTIALLY THE SAME. THE CAREFULLY WORDER LETTER TO THE PROFESSORS WAS PUBLISHED APPARENTLY TEXTUALLY IN LA NACION ON JUL 29.

3. THE VICE-PRESIDENTS SAID WHILE THEY COULD NOT UNDERSTAND THE SUPERFICIALITY WITH WHICH THE PROFESSORS VIEWED THE PROBLEM (ONE OF THE PROFESSORS'S SUGGESTIONS WAS THAT THE VICE-PRESIDENTS SHOULD ASK THE PRESIDENT TO RESIGN), THEY SHARED THEIR CONCERN OVER THE PRESIDENT'S CONNECTIONS WITH ROBERT VESCO. THE VICE-PRESIDENTS SAID THEY AGREED WITH OTHER CITIZENS, INCLUDING PLN MEMBERS, WHO THOUGHT PRESIDENT FIGUERES' HANDLING OF VESCO FUNDS THROUGH HIS PERSONAL ACCOUNT WAS QUESTIONABLE. THEY SAID IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN DONE IN A MANNER THAT WOULD HAVE AVOIDED THE SUSPICION AND CONTROVERSY WHICH HAVE DAMAGED THE PRESTIGE OF THE PRESIDENCY. THEY ALSO SAID THEY DISAGREED WITH THE SPECIAL CUSTOMS PRIVILEGES GIVEN VESCO BY FIGUERES. THE VICE-PRESIDENTS ADDED THAT DESPITE WHATEVER BENEFITS FIGUERES MAY HAVE BROUGHT TO COSTA RICA WITH VESCO, "WE CANNOT FORGET THAT HIS (VESCO'S) NAME IS CONNECTED WITH SCANDALOUS BEHAVIOUR IN OTHER COUNTRIES."

4. THE VICE-PRESIDENTS FIRMLY REJECTED THE SUGGESTION THAT THEY SET UP AN "HONOR COURT" TO JUDGE THE PRESIDENT. THEY CHARACTERIZED THIS IDEA AS "UNREALISTIC, INOPERATIVE, AND UNNECESSARY."

5. EDITORIAL COMMENT ON THE UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS'S PROPOSAL TO CREATE AN HONOR COURT HAS BEEN MIXED. EL DIARIO JULIO SUNOL EXPECTEDLY SEIZED ON THE INITIATIVE TO RECITE AGAIN, IN A BLISTERING ATTACK ON FIGUERES, THE VARIOUS ERRORS HE HOLD THE PRESIDENT ACCOUNTABLE FOR. LA PREPUBLICA CRITIZED THE PROFESSORS' PROPOSAL FOR CONTRIBUTING TO HEIGHTENED PUBLIC TENSIONS AT A CTIRICAL TIME EVEN THOUGH THE COLUMNIST ACKNOWLEDGED THERE IS A "MORAL QUESTION" INVOLVED IN FIGUERES'S RELATIONS WITH VESCO. LA HORA, PREPORTEDLY RECENTLY AFFILIATED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WITH FIGUERES INTERESTS, OBSERVED THAT THE PROFESSORS'S SCANDAL WILL NOT LAST MORE THAN THREE DAYS. PRESIDENT FIGUERES HIMSELF SAID WITH RESPECT TO THE PROFESSORS'S PROPOSAL, "IT DOES NOT WORRY ME AT ALL".
VAKY

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